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Two artists with impressive résumés show works

Bee Art Correspondent

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Oliver Jackson and Peter Wayne Lewis have a few things in common. Both are abstractionists and both do works that come from a process that is intuitive, meditative and improvisational.

Further, both have strong academic credentials. Jackson taught at California State University, Sacramento, for 30 years. Lewis teaches at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Boston.

Despite all the commonalities, the two artists' works are as different as night and day.

Jackson's dark, rich etchings are complex compositions in which figurative elements emerge from a welter of markings, drifting in and out of focus like things that well up from the unconscious.

Lewis' acrylic paintings are spare and jaunty plays of painterly wit that begin small as loose grids and squiggles, and burst out into song in larger canvases.

Jackson's works are symphonic; Lewis,' melodic.

Jackson's show at b. sakata garo ranges from large paintings and a collagelike tapestry to smaller though impressively wrought prints. The tapestry done in oil-based pigments and mixed media on linen is a tour de force. Abstracted figurative forms dance across the pieced and riveted fabric, and the cloth's warm tones give the innovative work a sensual quality.

Other paintings range from smaller-scaled explosions of color that suggest rioting blossoms in dense gardens to brooding pieces such as "Painting (12.17.03)" in which a powerful, shadowy figure emerges from an abstract space that suggests a room with venetian blinds. "Painting (11.4.10)" – a piece with radiant pinks, cool grays and flashes of gold – by contrast is as warm and glowing as a soft spring day.

The etchings, many using dry-point and aquatint techniques, range from the stark white-on-black forms of "Intaglio Print XI" to the intricate assemblage of figures both spiritual and corporeal that inhabit "Intaglio Print VI." Their boldness is offset by "Intaglio Print XVI," in which a delicate web of markings gives way to spritelike figures emerging from the edges of a welter of lines.

Lewis' work at Jay Jay ranges from small acrylics on paper affixed to canvas that reduce painting to its simplest terms, to large canvases that burst into riotous linear forms. A trio of small paintings from his "Beijing Booster" series ("#516," "#505" and "#532") form a kind of triptych. Here, the grid strings out across the three works telling a larger story.

"Beijing Booster #601" is a large canvas on which bold lines, squiggles and starbursts play quixotically across the picture plane in something resembling an explosion in a flower shop. In "Beijing Booster #540," the grid forms a kind of plaid in orange and green tones.

Some of the smaller works suggest the very beginnings of painting, with pale washes and tentative strokes of color, but larger works such as "Beijing Booster #602" are bold, the canvas bejeweled with beadlike forms that dangle like a necklace from bold, black, curvilinear lines.

It should be added that both artists have impressive résumés.

Lewis, who divides his time between Boston, New Jersey and Beijing, has exhibited internationally in China, Japan, Germany and Jamaica, where he was born. Jackson, who was born in St. Louis, has been a visiting artist in residence at Harvard and the School of the Art Institute in Chicago. His works are in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

We are lucky to have artists of their stature showing in Sacramento.

* Oliver Jackson

What: St. Louis-born Jackson's works are complex, symphonic compositions in which figurative elements emerge from a welter of markings. His works are in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

When: Noon to 6 p.m. through Saturday

Where: b. sakata garo, 923 20th St., Sacramento

Cost: Free

Information: (916) 447-4276, www.bsakatagaro.com

* Peter Wayne Lewis

What: This abstract artist produces spare, jaunty and melodic plays of painterly wit. He divides his time between Boston, New Jersey and Beijing, and has exhibited internationally in China, Japan, Germany and Jamaica, where he was born.

When: 11 a.m to 4 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday, through Dec. 23

Where: Jay Jay, 5520 Elvas Ave., Sacramento

Cost: Free

Information: (916) 453-2999, www.jayjayart.com

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